

# Prabuddha Bharata

वृत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत



माय्य वराजिबोधत ।

*Katha Upa. I. iii. 4*

Arise! Awake! And stop not till the Goal is reached.

—Swami Vivekananda.

VOL. XXIII ]

MARCH 1918

[ No. 260

## CONVERSATIONS AND DIALOGUES OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.

(RECORDED BY A DISCIPLE.)

[*Translated from Bengali.*]

XIII.—*Continued.*

[ Place :—*The rented Math at Belur.*

Time : 1898 A. D.

Subjects : *The realisation of the Self or Atman is inevitably attained through Karmayoga or work for the sake of others.—This point is argued by Swamiji at some length. ]*

After this, some pieces of Hindu music were rendered by Swamiji, but the disciple could not follow any way a single note of what was thus sung in an unfamiliar language, specially as he was perfectly innocent of the technique of music. So what could he do but keep his gaze fixed on the face of the singer? About this time, the devotees were all called to partake of refreshments as the first period of the long worship was over. After refreshment Swamiji came and took his seat in the parlour on the ground-floor, and all the many visitors settled down in circles round him. Accosting a householder friend who had his investiture with the

holy thread that day, Swamiji said, "Really you all belong to the twice-born castes, only it is long since you lost your status. From this day again, you become the twice-born. Repeat the *Gayatri* at least hundred times daily, do you see?" The householder expressed assent with, "Yes, Sir, I shall."

Meanwhile Sriji Mahendranath Gupta (Master-mahasaya) appeared on the scene, and Swamiji began to lavish on him many expressions of cordial reception. He was standing aloof in a corner after giving his greetings in silence, and the repeated requests of Swamiji made him take his seat in that corner with much confusion of modesty. "Master-mahasaya," said



Swamiji, "this is the anniversary of Thakur's birthday. So you shall have to relate to us something about Thakur." Master-mahasaya bent his head down smilingly in reply.

Just now it was announced that Swami Akhandananda was come from Murshidabad with a *pántuá*\* which weighed one maund and a half!! All of us hurried out to see this prodigious *pántuá*. When it was shown to Swamiji, he said, "Take it up to chapel for offering."

Making Swami Akhandananda the subject of his remarks, Swamiji said to the disciple, "Mark you, what a great hero he is in Karma (work)! Of fear, death and the like he has no cognizance, doggedly going on doing his own work,—'work for the welfare of the many, for the happiness of the many.'"

Disciple.— But, Sir, it must be a good deal of austerities out of which that power has come to him.

Swamiji.— True, power comes of austerities; but again, working for the sake of others itself constitutes Tapasyá (practice of austerity). The Karmayogins regard work itself as a part of Tapasyá. As on the one hand the practice of Tapasyá intensifies altruistic feelings in the devotee and actuate him to work, so also the pursuit of work for the sake of others carries the worker to the last fruition of Tapasyá, namely the purification of the heart, and leads him thus to the realisation of the supreme Atman.

Disciple.— But, Sir, how very few of us indeed can work whole-heartedly from the very outset for the sake of others! How difficult it is for such broad-minded-

ness to come at all as will make men sacrifice the desire for their own happiness and devote their lives for others!

Swamiji.— And how many have their minds going after Tapasyá? With the attraction for lust and lucre working the other way, how many long for the realisation of God? In fact, disinterested work is quite as much difficult as Tapasyá. So you have no right to say anything against those who go in for work in the cause of others. You find Tapasyá to be to your liking, well, go on with it, another finds work as congenial to himself, and you have no right to make a prohibition in his case. Ah, you have the settled idea in your mind, I see, that work is no Tapasyá at all!

Disciple.— That's it, Sir, I used to mean quite a different thing before this by Tapasyá.

Swamiji.— As by repeatedly following our religious practices, we find gradually a certain determined tendency of the mind engendered in us, so by performing disinterested work over and over again, even unwillingly, we gradually find the will merging itself in it. The inclination to work for others has thus to develop, do you see? Just do some such work once even though unwillingly and then see if the actual fruit of Tapasyá is realised within or not. As the outcome of work for the sake of others the many angularities of the mind get smoothened down and men are gradually lifted to a sincere preparedness for perfect self-sacrifice for the good of others.

Disciple.— But, how comes, Sir, the necessity at all for doing good to others?

Swamiji.— Well, it is necessary for my own good. We become forgetful of the ego when we think of the body as dedicated to the service of others,—the body

\* A small light sweetmeat usually about two inches in length, made mostly of the milk-products fried in ghee and put in syrup of sugar.



with which most complacently you identify the ego. And in the long run comes the consciousness of bodilessness. The more intently you come to think of the well-being of others, the more oblivious of self you become. In this way as gradually your heart gets purified by work, you will come to feel your own Self as pervading all beings and all things. Thus it is that the doing good to others constitutes a way, a means of revealing one's own Self or Atman. So know this to be one of the spiritual practices, a discipline for God-realisation. Its aim also is Self-realisation. Exactly as that aim is attained by Jnana (knowledge), Bhakti (devotion) and so on, so also by work for the sake of others.

Disciple.— But then if I am to keep thinking of others day and night, when shall I contemplate on the Atman, Sir? If I rest wholly occupied with something determinate and relative, how can I realise That which is indeterminate and Absolute?

Swamiji.— The highest aim of all disciplines, all spiritual paths, is the attainment of the knowledge of Atman. If you, by being devoted to the service of others and by getting your heart purified by such work, attain to the vision of all beings as the Self, what else remains unattained in the way of Self-realisation? Would you say that Self-realisation is the state of existing as inert matter, as this wall or as this piece of wood, for instance?

Disciple.— No; though that is not the meaning, yet what the Shastra (scripture) speaks of as the withdrawal of the Self into its real nature consists in the arresting of all mind-functions and all work.

Swamiji.— Yes, this Samadhi of which the Shastra speaks is a state not at all easy to attain. When very rarely it appears in somebody, it does not last for long, so what will he keep himself occupied

with? Thus it is that after realising that state described in the Shastra, the saint sees the Self in all beings and in that consciousness devotes himself to service, so that any Karma that was yet left working itself out through the body may thus exhaust itself. It is this particular state which has been described by the makers of Shastra as Jivan-mukti, "Freedom while living."

Disciple.— So after all it comes about, Sir, that unless this state of Jivan-mukti is attained, work for the sake of others can never be pursued in the truest sense of the term.

Swamiji.— Yes, that is what the Shastra has said; and yet again it says that work or service for the good of others leads up to this state of Jivan-mukti. Otherwise, there would have been no need on the part of the Shastra to teach us a particular path of religious practice called the Karma-yoga over and above the other three paths.

The disciple now understood the point and resumed silence, and Swamiji giving up the topic, commenced rendering in a voice of superhuman sweetness the following song, composed by Babu Girish Ch. Ghose to commemorate Sri Ramakrishna's Nativity:—

"Who art Thou lying on the lap of the poor Brahmin matron, throwing out a resplendence all around, oh, say, who art Thou come unclad, naked, into the lowly hut?

"Jewel incomparable on earth, oh, who art Thou come here to throw all men into a spell of joy? Or, art Thou come out of swelling compassion at seeing the world in dire distress?

"To reveal Thyself to the aggrieved in heart art Thou come in secret? The whole face aglow with compassion, for whose sake, say, Thou criest and smilest?

"Oh, the beauty of thy form, soul-ravishing, seeing which one can hardly turn one's eyes away from it. Thou who relievest the afflictions of the heart, I long to take Thee into my arms."



In the singing of this song, Swamiji was joined by Girish Babu and other devotees. The line in the song suggesting the advent of the Lord out of compassion for the world in distress was repeated several times. After this, other well-known songs were sung with great enthusiasm. And

then in accordance with the rituals by which the Nativity was solemnised, a live fish was released in the Ganges waters with much pomp and drum-beating. Lastly zeal and joy ran high when all the visitors sat to a sumptuous banquet spread out of the holy offerings to the Lord.

---

### OCCASIONAL NOTES.

**S**HOW me thy foot, genius,' cried the great romantic seer of France, towards the early seventies of the nineteenth century, 'and let us see if, like myself, thou hast the dust of earth upon thy heel. If thou hast never walked in the dusty footpath which I tread, thou knowest not me, nor I thee, depart! Thou who believest thyself an angel art but a bird.' And how little could the soul of Victor Hugo discern at that time that the star of the new angel had already swum into our 'ken,' that type of creation which can not only soar beyond the common horizon but can also descend on earth to fulfil the mighty purpose of national and international destiny, can determine the fate of the world for even better and larger ends than heretofore achieved. For such elements run together constituted the gigantic make-up of the personality of Swami Vivekananda, the acclaimed patriot-saint of modern India and not the lesser, therefore, in the eyes of all the world beside: The man whose victorious march on its bosom was as a great hurricane-blast that wrenched off the deep-rooted trees of distrust and disbelief, and helped to consign the accumulated weeds of ages of mutual ill-feeling and jealousy between religions, nations, classes and sects to one great holocaust of fire. And

all these for what? The saint who came into being and finished his earthly career before this crucial test of the modern civilisation in a world-wide war came on was not a mere idle visionary. His was the message of an "angel" for humanity and we who have recently observed his birth-festival synchronous with the birth of the springtide on the face of the earth, could do nothing better than lay to our heart the message that he gave to his own nation and incidentally to other nations as well.

---

The first thing to understand about him is the significant fact that everything that could make him one with his period and his country was his. In the light of the past he read the present and then pointed the way to the future. The staple of his inspiration lay in that help which is accorded to the weak by the strong, the worldly and the ease-loving by the spiritual, the ignorant by the knowing. He did not seek to make his virtues secluded and cloistered ones. He grappled with the problems of India at the present moment and ended by solving the problem for the whole world. It was no mere intellectual solution that he gave. With him, as with his great Guru, Bhagavan Ramakrishna Paramahansa, it was Deep calling



unto deep, Thought burning to possess thought, the Soul aquiver with the throb unseen, and Life passionately seizing and ennobling life. At the same time he never thought it a taint on his own soul to establish loving commerce with the concerns of the world, in all their broadest and deepest moments. But the intellectual mediocre was and is even now often stupefied in co-ordinating and understanding in their right relations which was uppermost in him, the soldier or the saint, the essence of both of which had gone to form the warp and woof of the precious web of his personality. It will sometimes seem that he danced his heroic measure on the level of a national idea alone, but that would be merely anticipating by half the fulness of his vision beatific, for he did catch the full glare of the etherial summits "where all is one and bliss" above. Who is he? Which is he? Tender, he uplifts the down-trodden and hugs in his bosom the socially molested, the humanly weak like Jesus of Nazareth now and then utters forth his epopee of a new social order perhaps, with all the ardour of an Encyclopædist and yet again, wrought to superhuman energy he laughs at the weakness of people as the 'Avidya' of the ages and creates what to some is "a divine satire" on the fate of humanity. Like Moses he would cause the water to gush forth from the rock and like Christ he would whip out the hucksters and traders from the temple of God. He knew his moments of love and hatred—this "angel-soul" on earth.

He was capable of both love and hatred as all great souls have been in the past as also in the present and with this great difference that hatred for him had no sting and he completely realised what is meant by hatred as but the inverted form of love,

of love human and divine. A born Sannyasin, he was the apostle of a new civic and national organisation. Yes, and only because his was the Life and vision, which the modern civilised consciousness wants more than anything else. He knew the part that hatred had played and is now playing in the political fashionings and re-fashionings of the different states of Europe. He knew all the dire consequences thereof. But life and love, like all other cherished things must bide by their good time and come not when men sigh snugly seated in their arm-chairs but go out on the quest in sackcloth and ashes.

It was the politics of the States, the groupings of nations which took place on the expiry of the Middle Ages and the inauguration of the modern era though the influence of the Renaissance and the Reformation movement, and the long and bloody wars that came in its train that came to mean a step which however productive of national solidarity and freedom of faith in Europe, was but the precursor of all international disunion and discord in thousand ghastly forms. The national solidarity came to base itself on the hatred of another nation, on the doubtful masonry work of political power and political exploitation of others in its scheme of self-aggrandisement. So that was how the real ends of human existence were forgot which India nourished all the while, though not always in an organised form, to her immense political discomfiture. And then with the process of years came to be added the other features of extreme commercialisation and industrialisation of nations which changed the whole colour of Europe and made her a prey to the python of that green monster, jealousy. And all this time only the recording angel in the



heart of Europe went silently writing on. The voice of the centuries still ringing in its ears Europe made desperate efforts to find new and newer forms of political redistribution of rights and privileges as the sole anchor-ground of its hope. But was not the water poisoned, at the very fountainhead, of which all its people had taken their fill before starting on their voyage?

And so the best intellects of Europe began systematically to employ all their resources in the production of theories and schools founded on them, which only countenanced strife-theory and along with it began the intellectual "storm and stress," that most dangerous wavering between the worlds of spirit and matter, that wrestling on the heights which, because of the weightiness of the issues involved, drew wonder and rapt attention only for a time but which at length culminated in turning the whole of Europe into one dreary soulless outlook of a mere mechanical and industrial stage-board reared on the bayonets of contending armaments. The rival neighbours all stiletto and mask playing at the game of political hide and seek in the utter dereliction of all spiritual hopes and aspirations. Still what a hope! It is this state again which they in their self-delusion labelled as one of true optimism and tried to sell that at a premium in all the markets of the East as well, sure in their belief that theirs was the kingdom of heaven and the plenty thereof. The time has come, however, when it understands that it is but the repetition in a larger scale of that historical mistake which Greece committed centuries before. And Europe with all her glib talk of growth and development is still but a province of Hellenistic culture. Greece and Rome have impressed their

long-enduring stamp upon its culture, entire. The Greek worshipped the state not merely as a symbol of external authority but also as a giver of his personal freedom. He incorporated his individuality with his city-state, of which he was a member. His immediate purview, his immediate environment, his social order, his fineness of artistic perception, his dreams of Gods, whose prime attributes were their beauty and grandeur,—all these were his very characteristic, which with certain modifications he has fully succeeded in handing down to his successors—the modern European nations.

To the Greek his spiritual nature unfolded in strict unity with that of the body and it is this latter phase of him which was reserved for a future philosopher on state and metaphysics to adopt, interpret and then disgustingly to discard. Hegel's was at first typically Greek and as such a European mind but he failed, even though he failed gloriously for he could divine the truth intellectually at least, which others could not. Here we speak guardedly lest we should happen to speak of the religious culture of the Middle Ages because to some writers that period of European history, at least in that particular part of it which attended to the highest religious consciousness, is but a mere blank, an accident in the annals of the full-blooded Europe of the modern era, full of the horrid Romish tyranny of the church and the Popes. So we come to speak of the failure of Hegel. Ever since political philosophy approximated to the condition of being systematised as a science in the West, it has been the invariable custom to discuss of the 'ends' of the state and Hegel's contribution to it was essentially of the moral type, in fit keeping with the



high idealistic strain of his philosophy. His interpretation of history and society was the outcome of this standpoint, when he said that "thought is eternal, and it is the consciousness of this thought which is gradually believed through the long succession of ages, races and humanity and it advances in possession of itself with the slow and gradual movement of creation." This was, again, that 'dialectical' development which he sought to exemplify in the Hellenistic mind, from a psycho-genetic study of the same. It was exactly here that he met with an utter break-down of his hopes—as such the most significant of all such failures because in Hegel Europe had found the one strong man who could wield this bow of Ulysses for its salvation by the wedding together of high metaphysics and politics, out of the heart of its materialistic centre. Hegel marked the inability of the Greek mind to cope with the realities of life, even the antinomian horrors thereof, because it was so narrow, so circumscribed that it could hardly venture to step out into what it called "the darkness beyond" of the other world. But was it really so? In fact the Greek mind was not really spiritual—it was the mere joy in the life phenomenal, life artistic to a degree. It merely thrived on ostrich optimism, it was hard for it to interrelate itself with any kind of organisation beyond that of the city-state kind. Rome had it to be sure but then it was all "hard prose" for the Roman, with his borrowed Greek culture with an imperialistic stamp put upon it. The truth then flashed into the mind of Hegel. He saw that a possession ceases to be spiritual by the very fact that it is not spiritually achieved, and so, with all respect for his category of ideal unity through reason, he could but now turn his face away from that aspect of reality and

optimism in life which the Greek mind disclosed.

---

And so it stands there—the eternal sphinx-problem of humanity, stern and grim in its urge for a speedy solution. Hegel with his limited vision of Græco-Roman-Hebraic conception failed to account for that spiritual culture, at once individual and social, which India alone did nourish through long long ages and solved the problem for state-politics and soul politics together. And so what he was content to leave to the intellect as a dialectical movement of the Absolute through history, a mere dovetailed conception of unity and plurality, which crippled his metaphysics of all latency to combine into an organic unity with the facts of the world, a lame Absolute, which the political theorists of a later date could do nothing but reject and sneer upon. The problem however received its answer, Œdipus-like, strikingly simple in the naivete and statement thereof but sharp as the blade of a razor to walk upon in practice. It is "Renunciation and love" and the sages of India had solved it long long ago. It was the voice of these ancient sages that once more grew terribly audible this time to the ears of the materialistic West in the hall of the Parliament of Religion in Chicago in the year 1893.

---

To-day we are asked to confront a new Europe. Once again, out of its reeking battle-fields has gone forth the cry for liberty and freedom in the highest sense—the renewed seeking for the north-west passage of light and life. It is not merely the hope of romantic seers and imaginative thinkers like the Goethes and Hugos of Europe but it is now the collective sentiment of a Europe plunged in the blood-



bath of millions of its sons. Mr. W. L. Courtenay, of the *Fortnightly Review* made this point plain in his book called the "Armageddon and After." A Mr. Henry Asquith defining the nature of public right, a Viscount Haldane or a Woodrow Wilson to-day only corroborates the so-called "utopian" thinkers and "hopeless idealists" of the world. Statesmen, financiers, chancellors and Parliamentary members, and the trustees of nation in every other sphere of thought and action are now gradually turning to it. The question of nationality is still a very important one. It is still organically bound up with the very being of man, but does it therefore preclude us from turning to love as the cementing basis instead of making hatred to serve the same purpose, masquerading so long in all the high-sounding names of political expediency, state integrity and so forth? The great point to remember every-time we fall into the mistake of divorcing politics from religion should be that life is one, not many, that the individual is but the state in a microcosm, and even greater than that. Protection in the individual means quite a world to the world of differences and prejudices—if only we have the eyes to see and the hearts to perceive. It is there that the hope of Indian nationalism lies buried and there also the internationalism of the future. Not a theory but Fact. Fact, grim and bare till we shine, "full alchemised and free of space."

They misunderstand Swami Vivekananda, when they try to make out of him a Kosciusko or a Karl Marx, a Mazzini or a Nietzsche. He was one and all of them and yet he was just himself and no other, just as he appeared to his contemporaries the 'angel' and the man, par excellence, the

two soul-fronts in one human shape combined to ride on the whirlwind of convulsions and scatter the seeds of world-wide amity and good-will. The supremest of idealists—was it ever insinuated of him that he should try to hide the inner light of him under a bushel and sell his divine and spiritual birthright for a mess of pottage, the hatred of Chauvinism, the one only stock-in-trade of the Western political theorists and nation-builders. For the nationalism which draws its inspiration from the gymnasts of the academy and the palæstra merely does and will undoubtedly find itself sandwiched between the Scylla of hatred for an alien people and alien rights and the Charybdis of class-strifes and class-prejudices within its own exclusive circle. The theory that the strength of a nation should be buttressed up on its hate of another has to hide its now diminishing head for ever, so that the new idea of national solidarity and national righteousness may emerge to shame the soul of the canting hypocrites, the pseudo-patriots, who have so long fed octopus-like on the heart's blood of each and every nation alike.

India has more than any other country that tremendous spiritual power which makes of all political accretions of strength but mere specks of froth on a vast mass of surging sea. Greece has failed to conquer Europe and the world along with it; and so has Rome with all her splendour of imperialistic pomp. It is the turn of India now and India with her spirituality is henceforth going to be a symbol for the wide-awake post-war civilisation of the world. Vivekananda was born emphatically for this, if for no other reason.

And this once more is the hope of India. It is no mere stop-gap optimism of the



West, borrowed from Hellenistic sources, but the optimism which rich in its spiritual contents can take this also for a passing show. How many of us are there who have the grit so to deny the world and the flesh as Vivekananda did? And yet we have to rise to his consciousness, for that is the legacy he has left for us, to bring that within, which is strength and love and order without. The era of transvaluation of all values in the homes, the courts, the councils, the cabinet-chambers, every nook and crevice of human society has come—and all to be accomplished in the light of

that true vision of the one which India witnessed to and made into a power for good everywhere. Think of it, dream of it! We are not to lay down our arms where we are for that mighty prophecy is now going to be fulfilled in its actual sense—"Behold, ye shall not sleep and ye shall all be changed." Death will then lose all its sting and life its horrors when once we have pledged ourselves to that point of view and answered that eternally ringing voice of challenge—"Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached."

---

### "THE ECSTASY."

(*Chapitre VIII., Visions de L'Inde, par Jules Bois.—"L'Éxtase."*)

[TRANSLATED BY BABU GURUDAS SARCAR, M. A.]

WE have fled past the town. The docks with their length of 12 English miles have come to an end. The waters of the Ganges are rising around us and a favourable tide is carrying us towards the monastery, all white—in its palmgrove—over which rises the trident of the Pagoda—the monastery beckons to us from its complaisant terraces.

The American lady has become grave. She remembers having heard at New York this Vivekananda who charms the Souls. She agreed at once when I asked her to accompany me. She is an indefatigable traveller. I was presented to her at Paris during the Exposition (Exhibition). We met since at Cairo and again in Calcutta, yesterday, before the Great Eastern Hotel. I recognised her by her steely glance and her profile—chaste and insatiate. "How small is the world," she cried. "The earth is only a crossway where wanderers cross each other." Vivekananda is standing on

the terrace. His big eyes seemed to have eaten up his visage.

This man—with almost a swarthy complexion—and dressed as the Aryans of six thousand years ago—born so far from my corner of the earth—speaking another tongue and adoring another God—has been my best friend. He lived at Paris for several weeks in my residence. Together we travelled to Constantinople, Greece and Egypt. He incarnated for me—with his genius and his perilous frenzy—that India which I cherish as the Fatherland of my dreams—the Eden where lives the Ideal.

We discussed together all the questions relating to destiny and the hereafter. Like the great Tolstoy—who is about to die—this Hindu has got the speciality that he conforms his life to his thoughts—living the life of a vagrant and renouncing all that makes the joy and pride of other men—love, family, and even the glory of writing and of being an artist. A monk!



His life-story, as Emerson would say,—is a representative one. As a child he met a sage—a “Paramhansa,” a “Mahatma,” a great soul. It was a Brahmin ignorant in Science and Learning but formidable in Asceticism whom his disciples call Ramkrishno—a name combined of those of the two great heroes of Ind, of whom he is supposed to have been a reincarnation. Ramkrishno did not know Sanskrit which is still the sacred language. He never wrote—he never travelled abroad—his delicate life rolled on in its short enough course—in the gardens of another temple of Kali lying to the north of Calcutta. He spoke to his people when the ecstasy could no longer hold him in its abysmal depth.

The boy who had become his chosen disciple drank in with his ears all the instructions of the master and as his heart of a patriot bled at all the miseries and despairs of his country he dreamed of regenerating it after the sublime counsel of this recluse. The latter called him Vivekanando or “Happy conscience” and ordained him to travel all over the world in order to bring back the experience necessary to reformers. Then he died. The young disciple believed in the departed soul. He became a Sanyasi, threw aside even his garments and besmeared with ashes—he went all over India on foot—eating sometimes in the palaces of Rajas—and sometimes in the huts of the humble peasants—sleeping sometimes under trees or in the verandahs—lamenting the loss of his master and vowing to render immortal and efficacious the gospel which he had received from him.

It was a sort of Universal Religion—without precise cult—with equal respect for all the gods and their messengers. When he believed himself fortified by that wandering life of a divine mendicant, he

departed for America where he obtained by his lectures a fabulous success. But he finished by losing there his fragile health of a Bengalee—liable hereditarily to diabetes and the disease of the liver. No matter, he brought a sum sufficient for erecting his monastery and receiving there the members of the Brotherhood, the disciples of the same master.

These are the first words at the threshold of his house—“I am free, my friend—I am liberated anew. I have given all. The money weighed me down like chains. I am now the poorest man in the poorest country in the world. But the House of Ramkrishno has been built and his spiritual family has received a shelter.”

He saw the American and saluted her with a gentle gesture which has become in the West the attitude of prayer—the hands joined—the heads inclined. It is thus in the images—the spouses of the Hindu gods are represented before the celestial masters.

Then he presented us to his people saying—“Behold my brothers and my children,” under their splendid turbans—the young men smiled at us—with still ingenuous eyes of the apprentices of life. The old people snatched themselves off from their meditation of the Vedas—their bent foreheads marked with the Shivaic symbol. Sudras—Brahmans—and Parrias also were united here, as, for the Prophet the caste is abolished. God is equally present in all. He took a *narghilé* (Hooka pipe) which a disciple was smoking and drew from it a puff which perfumed the air round as with an odour of the rose. Then he gave us some lotus flowers.—“Come upon the terraces” said he, “my friends are about to prepare the tiffin.” (In Anglo-India they call thus, the repast of the middle of the day.) From there we



saw the most moving spectacle. It was India—her fields fresh under the burning sun—the ponds like some mirrors which a goddess might have let fall in her flight—the forests (from afar) soft like velvet fleece—and the Ganges like a virile arm which folds the earth—in love.

On the other side of the stream a pagoda reared its spire. Near it a great banian tree spread its enormous branches which striking the descending roots into the soil had transformed themselves into separate trees.

—Under its shade my master Ramkrishno entered for the first time into "Samadhi," that is to say—into an ecstasy in which he was merged into the Godhead. For us the spot is as sacred as the Bodhi tree at Bodh Gaya, near which Gautam became conscious of his mission.

Half an hour afterwards—in his cell Vivekanando himself served us the "tiffin" which consisted of eggs, fresh milk, aromatic grains and mangoes—fruits which were to us more exquisite than peaches. But he himself could not sit with us. He begged to be excused for not giving us meat. The monastery made no use of it.

Strange apartment this of the Swami where the nude simplicity of a Hindu anchorite was mixed up with the practical furniture of a Western philosopher—rocking chair, a library of varied works where Emerson and Spencer肘owed the indigenous publications gathered in rolls.

A disciple offered us some betels in a green leaf. They all came from the monastery garden where they had been gathered. I chewed. A taste of nicotine and flower filled my mouth—my teeth became red.

"Narcotics are smoked or chewed all over India" said the Sanyasi with a smile. "For us, life is a dream and what you call dream among yourselves is for us the sole reality. All that are for you true,

veritable and real—because of their visible or tangible attribute are, for us a sport of Maya—a mere Illusion—that which changes and passes away is not worth the trouble of being loved—nor even of being looked at. The cities, the luxury, and the glories, the civilisations and the prodigies of material science—we have known them all for centuries and we are disgusted with the usage. Childish sports devised for children.

"We are awakened from the brutalising dream of which you are still under the influence. We shut the eyes, retain our breath and sit under the soft shadow of the trees in front of the primitive fire. The infinite then opens to us the marvellous doors and we enter into the inner world which is the only truth. There—see for yourself. There are few Europeans who have penetrated these mysteries."

We leaned towards the window of the cell. A clock struck. In the garden under an Indian fig tree the monks were seated in a circle. They balanced the head and the back in a rhythmic movement. He who had just accompanied us sang in a strange voice—recalling our plain-chant but more strident and more joyous. In the centre a fire burnt away into grey cinders. At the side of the fire the trident of Shiva was planted dressed in garlands, all fixed their eyes upon the flame where dwelt the divinity. A great peace soared up from the organisms hypnotised by the igneous soul—a peace frightful to us whom activity turns tipsy—a peace from which rose up the chant as on a sonorous wing—and the golden bees danced over the ecstatic heads in streaks of sunlight, while from inside the sacred stables the cows raised their venerable heads associating themselves with the strange cult in which man reenters into universal nature and is annihilated without death.



## EPISTLES OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.

( *Translated from Bengali.* )

CXXXII.

Salutation to Bhagavan Ramakrishna!

1891.

Dear and beloved,

Your letter gives me all the news over there. I am grieved to hear of the bereavement — has sustained. Such is the Lord's will. This is a place for action, not enjoyment, and everyone will go home when his task is done, —some earlier, and some later, that is all. R— has gone—well, such is the will of the Lord! It is a welcome news that Sri Ramakrishna's Festival has come off with great *ecclat*; the more his name is spread, the better it is. But there is one thing to know—great sages come with special messages for the world, and not for name, but their followers throw their teachings overboard and fight over their names—this is verily the history of the world. I do not take into any consideration whether people accept his name or not, but am ready to lay down my life to help his teachings, his life and his message spread all over the world. What I am most afraid of is the worship-room. It is not bad in itself, but there is a tendency in some to make this all in all and set up that old-fashioned nonsense over again,—this is what makes me nervous. I know why they busy themselves with those old, effete ceremonials. Their spirit craves for work, but having got no outlet they waste their energy in ringing bells and all that.

I am giving you a new idea. If you can work it out then I shall know you are men, and will be of service.....Make an organised plan. A few cameras, some maps, globes, and some chemicals etc. are needed. The

next thing you want is a big hut. Then you must get together a number of poor, indigent folk. Having done all these, show them pictures from Astronomy, Geography etc. and preach Sri Ramakrishna to them. Try to have their eyes opened as to what has taken place or is taking place in different countries, what this world is like, and so forth. You have got lots of poor and ignorant folk there. Go to their cottages, from door to door, in the evening, at noon, any time,—and open their eyes. Books etc. won't do—give them oral teaching. Then slowly extend your centres. Can you do all this? Or, only bell-ringing?

I have heard everything about — from Madras. They are highly pleased with him. Dear —, if you go to Madras and live there for some time, it will do a lot of work. But before you go, start this work there first. Can't the lady devotees convert some widows into disciples? And can't you put a bit of learning into their heads? And can't you then send them out to preach Sri Ramakrishna from door to door, and impart education along with it? \* \*

Come! Apply yourselves heart and soul to it. The day of gossip and ceremonials is gone, my boy, *you must work now*. Now, let me see how far a Bengalee's religion will go. L— wants some warm clothing. The people here import winter clothing from Europe and India. You will get a piece of cloth in Calcutta at one fourth of the price at which I shall buy it here.....I don't know when I shall go to Europe, everything is uncertain with me,—I am getting on somehow in this country, that is all.

This is a very funny country. It is now summer—this morning it was as hot as April



in Bengal, but now it is as cold as February at Allahabad! So much fluctuation within four hours! The hotels of this country beggar description. For instance, there is an hotel in New York where a room can be hired for up to Rs. 5000 a day, excluding boarding charges. Not even in Europe is there a country like this in point of luxury. It is indeed the richest country in the world, where money is drained off like water. I seldom live in hotels, but am mostly the guest of big people here. To them I am a widely known man. The whole country knows me now, so wherever I go they receive me with open arms into their homes. Mr. H—'s home is my centre in Chicago.—I call his wife mother, and his daughters call me brother. I scarcely find a family so highly pure and kind. Or why should God shower His blessings on them in such abundance, my brother? Oh, how wonderfully kind they are! If they chance to learn that a poor man is in a strait at such and such a place, there, they will go, ladies and gentlemen, to give him food and clothing, and find him some job! And what do we do!

In summer they leave their homes to go to foreign lands, or to the sea-side. I, too, shall go somewhere, but have not yet fixed a place. In other points, they are just as you see with Englishmen. They have got books and things of that sort, but very dear. You can have five times those things in Calcutta for the same price. In other words, these people will not let foreign goods be imported into the country. They set a heavy tax on them, and as a result, the market goes up enormously. Besides, they are not much in the way of manufacturing clothings etc. They construct tools and machinery, and grow wheat, rice, cotton etc.—which are fairly cheap.

By the bye, now-a-days we have plenty of hilsa fish here. Eat your fill, but everything digests. There are many kinds of fruits; plantain, lemon, guava, apple, almond, raisin; and grape are in abundance; besides many

other fruits come from California. There are plenty of pineapples, but there are no mangoes or lichis, or things of that sort.

There is a kind of spinach, which when cooked, tastes just like our *noté* of Bengal, and another class, which they call asparagus, tastes exactly like the tender *dengo* herb, but you can't have our *charchari* made of it here. There is no *kalái* or any other pulse, they do not even know of them. There is rice, and loaf, and numerous varieties of fish and meat, of all descriptions. Their menu is like that of the French. There is your milk, rarely curd, but plenty of whey. Cream is an article of everyday use. In tea, and coffee, and everything there is that cream,—not the hardened crust of boiled milk, mind you—and there is your butter, too, and ice-water,—no matter whether it is summer or winter, day or night, whether you have got a bad cold or fever,—you have ice-water in abundance. These are scientific people and laugh when they are told that ice-water aggravates cold. The more you take, the better. And there is plenty of ice-cream, of all sorts of shapes. I have seen the Niagara Falls seven or eight times, the Lord be praised! Very grand no doubt, but not quite as you have heard them spoken of. One day, in winter, we had the aurora borealis. \* \* Only childish prattle! I have not much time to listen to that sort of thing in this life; it will be time enough to see if I can do that in the next.

J— has completely rallied by this time, I hope? The vagabond spirit of — is not yet at an end, I see. What is wanted is a power of organisation—do you understand me? Have any of you got that much brain in your head? If you do, let your mind work. — will be able to do it. — has got very little originality, but is a very good workman, and persevering—which is an essential necessity, and is executive to a degree. \* \* We want some disciples—fiery young men,—do you see?—intelligent and brave, who dare to go to the jaws of Death, and are



ready to swim the ocean across. Do you follow me? We want hundreds like that, both men and women. Try your utmost for that end alone. Make converts right and left, and put them into our purity-drilling machine.

\* \* What made you communicate to the "Indian Mirror" that Paramahansa Deva used to call Narendra such and such, and all sorts of nonsense?—As if he had nothing else to do but that! Only thought-reading and nonsensical mystery-mongering! \* \* It is excellent that — is visiting you often. Do you write letters to G—? Convey to him my love, and take kind care of him. Everything will come right by degrees. I don't find much time to write heaps of letters. As for lectures and so forth, I don't prepare them beforehand. Only one I wrote out, which you have printed. The rest I deliver off-hand, whatever comes to my lips,—Gurudeva backs me on. I have nothing to do with pen and paper. Once at Detroit I held forth for three hours at a stretch. Sometimes I myself wonder at my own achievement—to think that there was such stuff in this pate! They ask me here to write a book, well, I think I must do something that way, this time. But that's the botheration; who will take the trouble of putting things in black and white and all that! \* \*

We must electrify society, electrify the world. Idle gossips and barren ceremonials won't do. Ceremonials are meant for householders, your work is the distribution and propagation of thought-currents. If you can do that, then it is all right. \* \*

Let character be formed, and then I shall be in your midst. Do you see? We want two thousand Sannyasins, nay ten, or even twenty thousand—men and women, both. What are our matrons doing? We want converts at any risk. Go and tell them, and try yourselves, heart and soul. Not householder-disciples, mind you, we want Sannyasins. Let each one of you have a hundred heads tousured—young educated men, not

fools. Then you are heroes. We must make a sensation. Give up your passive attitude, gird your loins and stand up. Let me see you make some electric circuits between Calcutta and Madras. Start centres at places, go on always making converts. Convert everyone into the monastic order, whoever seeks for it, irrespective of sex, and then I shall be in your midst. A huge spiritual tidal wave is coming—he who is low shall become noble and he who is ignorant shall become the teacher of great scholars—through his grace. "उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत"—"Awake! Arise! and stop not till the goal is reached." Life is ever expanding, contraction is death. The self-seeking man who is looking after his personal comforts and leading a lazy life,—there is no room for him even in hell. He alone is a child of Sri Ramakrishna who is moved to pity for all creatures and exerts for them even at the risk of incurring personal damnation—इतरे कृपयाः—"others are vulgar people." Whoever, at this great spiritual juncture, will stand up with a courageous heart, and go on spreading from door to door, from village to village, his message, is alone my brother, and a son of his. This is the test, he who is Ramakrishna's child, does not seek his personal good.—"प्राणायामेऽपि परकल्याण-चिकीर्षवः"—"They wish to do good to others even when at the point of death. Those that care for their personal comforts and seek a lazy life, who are ready to sacrifice all before their personal whims, are none of us; let them pack off, yet while there is time. Propagate his character, his teachings, his religion. This is the only spiritual practice, the only worship, this verily is the means, and this the goal. Arise! Arise! A tidal wave is coming! Onward! Men and women, down to the Chandāla—all are pure in his eyes. Onward! Onward! There is no time to care for name, or fame, or Mukti, or Bhakti! We shall look to these some other time. Now in this life let us infinitely spread his lofty character, his sublime life, his infinite soul. This is the



only work—there is nothing else to do. Wherever his name will reach, the veriest worm will attain divinity, nay, is actually attaining it, you have got eyes and don't you see it? Is it a child's play? Is it silly prattle? Is it foolery? “उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत”—“Arise! Awake!” Great Lord! He is at our back, I cannot write any more.—Onward! I only tell you this that whoever reads this letter, will imbibe my spirit! Have faith! Onward! Great Lord! \* \* I feel as if somebody is moving my hand to write in this way. Onward! Great Lord! Everyone will be swept away! Take care, he is coming! Whoever will be ready to serve him,—no, not him, but his children,—the poor and the down-trodden, the sinful and the afflicted, down to the very worm—who will be ready to serve

these, in them he will manifest himself. Through their tongue the Goddess of Learning Herself will speak, and the Divine Mother—the Embodiment of all Power—will enthrone Herself in their hearts. Those that are atheists, unbelievers, worthless and foppish, why do they call themselves as belonging to his fold? \* \*

Yours affectionately,

Vivekananda.

P. S. \* \* The term Organisation means division of labour. Each does his own part and all the parts taken together express an ideal of harmony. Here are a few lines of poetry for your perusal—

“A song I sing to thee,” &c.

## SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S MISSION TO THE WEST.

(By BRAHMACHARI GURUDAS.)

THE Parliament of Religions at Chicago, in 1893 was convened with a very definite object. That object presumably was, to bring before the world a clear conception of what men of different climes, of different nations, of different beliefs, held to be the highest aim in life; to make known to all the world what man thought about himself, about nature and about God,—in short, to learn the ideals of the religious belief held by people from the different corners of the earth. And then to compare notes and to settle once for all the nettling question, which of the many religions professed by man, should stand supreme, which belief would be entitled to proclaim itself paramount and best fitted as a universal religion.

A lofty idea, no doubt. But there was no question in the Western mind as to the outcome of the contest. And there were strange rumours abroad. The West, always confident,

always cock-sure of herself, convinced beyond the idea of a doubt that she leads the world in every field of accomplishment, that her civilisation, her culture, her customs, her ideals are the standard after which Eastern races should model themselves, the West, considering her conquest of Eastern nations as a boon to these, what she calls, less enlightened peoples,—felt satisfied that in the year 1893, at Chicago a conquest would be made which would silence, once for all, the feeble voice of all coloured races; that she would make the greatest of all her conquests, the conquest of religion. And that from that day on, she would be able to silence with authority, all claims of religion, uttered by protesting voices. Christianity, so hopelessly unsuccessful in the East before, would after that memorable day unfurl her banner in every land upon which the sun smiles. The East would be convinced of the folly of further



protest against, of further indifference towards the religion of the West. The doors would be opened for the missionaries and the East would be Christianized.

The one point on which the East had not yet submitted was her religion. It was the one rock on which the Western sword had broken, unable to withstand the force of contact. All this would soon be changed. Submissive, on bent knees, the head bowed low, the East would sit at the feet of the West, to learn of her the message of peace and salvation. The Parliament of Religions was to bring the heathen to his senses.

But the gods smiled. And the Rishis in celestial spheres rejoiced. For they knew that at last the day had come when their age-long austerities, their Tapasya, their renunciation, their prayers, their meditations, their life-long Brahmacharya, would bear fruition. And through the voice of one of their chosen children, the entire wealth of their realisations would flood, not only the land which they had graced and blessed with their presence, but even the entire world. For East and West alike would hear the glad tidings of deliverance.

And the East would listen and the West would listen and the glorious message of brotherly love and compassion would encircle the earth. For once more the command had sounded—and this time in the ears of a modern saint in India—"Go ye out into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature."

And so the day drew nearer. The Chicago exhibition was opened, the gates were lifted and people streamed in by the thousands to see the wonders of the world collected at Chicago. And then the Parliament of Religions commenced its sessions. The West came well prepared; the Occidental mind offered its best. Men of distinction, orators, men of learning and high dignitaries of the different churches faced the vast assembly. And the audience was all-expectant.

The East was represented by men of different Oriental faiths. A picturesque gathering they were, these men so dignified, wearing coloured turbans, some in long robes, white and yellow and red. A pleasing picture, this array of heathens, their faces so calm and still so expressive, their eyes large and with a mysterious look. "If they were only Christians," was the sentimental sigh of the church-ladies. But they were not Christians. Some of them even were idolaters. Terrible thought! For little did they who lamented the lot of these men, surmise that some of these brown-faced teachers had more of the Christ-spirit within them, than they themselves possessed. And far was it from them to expect that there was a great surprise in store for that august assembly.

Many a speaker unburdened his soul in eloquent speech, as one by one, they rose on the platform. The audience listened with more or less patience and attention. But they wanted to hear these strange men from the East, who sat there like statues, apparently little moved by what went on before them. There was one amongst these who had been singled out by the audience as the most striking figure. The West is not blind to beauty. Those brilliant eyes, exceptionally large, that perfectly chiselled face, the erect and well-formed frame,—a majestic figure. This was the Swami Vivekananda.

But what would his lips disclose should once they open to speak? What strange superstitious ideas would they reveal to the expectant audience? They became impatient to hear him. Would he never rise? It was past morning. They had sat there many hours. When would come his turn? A moment!—The chairman moves. He bends in his direction.—A few whispering words.—At last the figure rises. The face is calm as an unruffled ocean. The eyes look far out into space. Is he inspired?

A few steps forward and the Swami Vivekananda stands before his audience.—



There is pin-drop silence.—One sweeping glance over the vast assembly and the lips open. The voice is sonorous, clear and distinct.—“Sisters and Brothers of America!”

The first words are spoken. And these words will go down in the history of religions, “Sisters and Brothers of America!”

An electric shock went through the audience. Here was inspiration indeed; a heart laying itself open before the world. Here, in half a sentence, the culture of an ancient race expressed itself. Unseen hands clasped hands. A world-soul had touched the finest, the noblest string of the human heart. “Sisters and Brothers of America!” The words were few, but the man stood revealed.

In an instant the Parliament of Religions had found itself. Its meaning, its object, its aim stood revealed in this one expression: “Sisters and Brothers of America!” Glorious utterance! The East had touched the West; separating oceans dried up; the world stood united. For one short moment at least, barriers dropped, colour of skin was forgotten, difference in attire was overlooked, peculiarity in manners did no longer count. Man stood face to face with man.

Another moment of silence. The lips open again. But who could sit there unmoved; who could listen? The heart had been touched. The stirred-up feeling was too overpowering and it gave way in an outburst of enthusiastic applause. The Swami Vivekananda, the heathen from distant India, was the master of the situation. In five short words he had formulated the ideas that half-consciously each one present had struggled to express. Swami Vivekananda, the prophet, had sounded the key to which the further progress of the Parliament was to be attuned.

Here was a master who had revealed man to man, who with one stroke had cleared the mental horizon, who had brought to the surface what is best and noblest in man,—the recognition that we are all children of one Parent, of that very one Parent, whose bless-

ings had been invoked at the opening of the session.

The rest of the story is known to you all. How during the following sessions the people clamoured for a few words from the lips of the Hindu monk. And how they would sit for hours to hear a few sentences from the sage of India.

And what a message he brought! For he always kept the standard high. The opening sentence was, as it were, the theme, of which his following addresses were beautiful variations. Always impersonal, his message was for his Sisters and Brothers in America. And America then represented the world. For the Parliament of Religions was a world-Parliament.

Swami Vivekananda had come to Chicago to share with the world, to give freely to all humanity, that which it had taken him all his life to gather. He asked for no recognition, for no reward. He gave as Jesus gave, as Buddha gave, as his own Master had given,—the bread of life, without price.

He started no sect, he initiated few disciples. He was contented to sow the seed, that all might reap the harvest. “I do not ask you to become my followers,” he said, “I want to help you to become better men and better women.” And he spoke from their own scriptures, and he spoke of their own Saviour. And from the Hindu scriptures he used what would illustrate and strengthen their own belief. “I have not come to make you Hindus,” he said on another occasion, “I have come to make you better Christians.” But he never tried to hide his own inheritance, that ancient culture, the accumulation of centuries of high thinking and right living, that culture which stands behind every sentence of even the oldest of Indian scriptures. And saturated as he was with the teachings of the sages of his own land, he would pour out story after story, he would quote sloka after sloka from Purana and Sruti. And this he would often do to explain and point out the beauty and poetry of their own Bible.



It was gracious ; it was exceedingly generous. "I do not wish to break down," he said, "I want to erect and strengthen. I preach tolerance, for all religions contain truth." And in his melodious voice he would chant in Sanskrit and then give in English that beautiful gem from the Upanishads : "As different rivers having their source in different places, all mingle their water in the sea, so, oh Lord, the different paths which men take through different tendencies, various though they appear, crooked or straight, all lead to Thee." And then from the Gita : "Whosoever comes to Me, through whatever form, I reach him. All men are struggling through paths which in the end lead to Me."

There was a message for the West,—all religions, when sincerely practised, lead to God ! Different religions are so many paths that lead to him !

And before the minds of those present, flitted dark pictures of the past. How man had slain man, for religion's sake ; how thousands upon thousands of human beings, men and women of the same blood, had butchered each other in the name of God.

Rack of torture, burning-pyre and guillotine had disappeared, but did not the rancour of religious strife still embitter many a human heart ? Was not sect still opposed to sect ? Roman Catholic against Protestant, Protestant against Roman Catholic ? One denomination scorning the other ?

Once more Light had come from the East. The light was now shining before them. And under the soothing influence of that benign light, it was brought home to this vast audience, that they were all sisters and brothers, children of one heavenly Father, fellow-pilgrims on their way to God.

And of that heavenly Father, the Swami Vivekananda spoke to the Christians of the West. And he explained how the same heavenly Father is worshipped in India and how the Hindus also worship Him as the Divine Mother of the universe, and then he

went farther and told that God is sometimes worshipped as the divine Child and even as the Beloved, the divine Spouse. And then the Swami told them of the final vision of the Yogis in Samadhi. How in the solitude of the Himalayan forest, these heroic men had meditated on the ultimate Truth, how they dared to penetrate deeper into the mystery of Being, brushing aside all limiting visions, till they stood face to face with the Absolute and God was realised as "He, who is the one life in a universe of death, as He, who is the constant basis of an ever-changing world, as that One, who is the only Soul, of which all souls are but delusive manifestations."

Such revelations were startling. It was new in the West. But gradually the Swami won ground. And those who loved him and followed him, understood that he did not destroy, but that he led onward. For no hope was blasted, no vision scorned, no ideal knocked on the head. But there was guidance and advice and suggestion. The child was lifted till it could stand, it was led by the hand till it could walk alone. Always the next sign-post was pointed out. "It is good to be born in a church," Swamiji said, "but not to die there. Reach farther than churches can possibly take you. Have your own belief, but try to expand. Let your vision broaden, let your mental horizon extend. Churches and doctrines are the hedges to protect the tender plant. But they must be broken down that the plant may become a tree."

And so he pointed out how the belief in heaven, as held by the Christians, is but a halting place on the way to Mukti ; how salvation is the stepping-stone on which to reach divine wisdom ; how *love* for God must lead to *realisation* of God and how the Personal God is but one aspect of Brahman.

And of Jesus he spoke and of Buddha and of Sri Krishna and sometimes of his own master. And he told the Christians that these were all alike sons of God.

This was the path by which Swamiji led his disciples. They were never the losers,



they were always the gainers. For good, they were shown the better, for the small, greater. It was an intellectual and a spiritual expansion.

To say that Eastern thought was entirely unknown in the West till the advent of the Swami Vivekananda, is not correct. Western scholars had given us some of the Hindu scriptures in our own language. But to very few, the teaching as it stood, was intelligible. Theosophy had made us acquainted with two great principles, the law of Karma and re-incarnation. But their teaching was mostly culled from the Puranas. It is therefore that we hailed the Swami Vivekananda as the first authoritative exponent to the West of the ideas of the Vedas and the Upanishads. His exposition was clear and comprehensible. It was masterly. He brought order out of

chaos. He sifted. And Mahatmas and astral bodies and elementals went with the chaff. "No mystery-mongering," he said, "it weakens the brain. No secret societies, religion must be opened to all." And I remember how I myself had once joined a religious society. But I had to withdraw. For when I asked for the practical application of their teaching and for demonstration of what they claimed to have acquired, I found no response. Neither could I get admittance to their esoteric meetings.

What a relief then was it to myself and others, to come in contact with Swamiji and the other Swamis of the Ramkrishna Mission. For with them, the practical side of religion meant everything. And they freely opened their spiritual treasures to one and all.

(To be concluded).

## AN ODE.

[ CAROLL DEMETER. ]

Rush o'er the world of war,  
Chaos and ruin,  
Rush o'er all nations' woes,  
The gasps of death between,

Vivekananda's name.

Over the earth to brood,  
Mighty, Supreme;  
Spirit of strength and bliss,  
Life-giving hymn,

Vivekananda's name.

Heart of adamant, monarch of men,  
Of thine plenitude 'pon us do rain,  
Visit with thy power ever Time's eternal  
shore,

Mightily awake,  
Never us forsake,  
Thou that dwell'st in light, shine evermore.

Raise thy song that lie  
On earth's quagmire lost,  
Raise us, O bless us,  
The lowly, passion-tost.

Thou, O best of Mother Earth!  
Thou that had'st thy birth,  
Dressed in thy breast-plate of superhuman  
scale

Of freemen of a heavenly growth,  
Angels of the plighted troth  
For work in his own trackless seas in the  
wind and gale,  
Holy spirit, hail!

Holy spirit, hail!  
Over the earth's shadows fly,  
Light up the murky sky,  
O thou, Gleam of Shakti, with Her power  
wrought,







41. As he thus speaks, tormented by the afflictions of the world—which is like a forest on fire—and seeking his protection, the saint eyes him with a glance softened with pity and spontaneously bids him give up all fear.

विद्वान्स तस्मा उपसत्तिमीयुषे

मुमुक्षवे साधु यथोत्कारिणे ।

प्रशान्तचित्ताय शमान्विताय

तत्त्वोपदेशं कुर्याच्च कुर्यात् ॥४२॥

42. To him who has sought his protection, thirsting for liberation, who duly obeys the injunctions of the scriptures, who is of a pacified mind, and endowed with calmness,—(to such a one) the sage proceeds to inculcate the truth out of sheer grace:

[ This verse is an adaptation of Mundaka Upa. I. ii. 13.

To him who &c.—The adjectives imply that he is a qualified aspirant. ]

मा भैष्ट विद्वंस्तव नास्त्यपायः

संसारसिन्धोस्तरणोऽस्त्युपायः ।

येनैव याता यतयोऽस्य पारं

तमेव मार्गं तव निर्दिशामि ॥४३॥

43. Fear not, O learned one, there is no death for thee; there is a means of crossing this sea of relative existence; that very way by which sages have gone beyond it, I shall inculcate to thee.

अस्त्युपायो महान्कश्चित्संसारभयनाशनः ।

तेन तीर्त्वा भवास्मोर्ध्वं परमानन्दमाप्स्यसि ॥४४॥

44. There is a sovereign means which puts an end to the fear of relative existence; through that thou wilt cross the sea of Samsāra and attain bliss supreme.

वैशान्तार्थविचारेण जायते ज्ञानमुत्तमम् ।

वैनायन्तिकसंसारदुःखनाशो भवत्यनु ॥४५॥

45. Reasoning on the meaning of the Vedānta leads to efficient knowledge, which is immediately followed by the total annihilation of the misery born of relative existence.

[ *Efficient knowledge*—the highest knowledge, which consists of the realisation of the identity of the individual soul with Brahman. ]

(To be continued.)

## THE FIFTY-SIXTH BIRTHDAY ANNIVERSARY OF THE SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.

### At Belur Math.

The fifty-sixth birthday anniversary of Swami Vivekananda came off on the 3rd of February last, when, as usual, the Belur Math held its celebration in the midst of a very large concourse of the Swamis, Bhaktas and admirers of all sects and creeds. This year the two different celebrations, that of the "Tithi-puja" and the public festivity both fell on the same day and the conjoint glory of the occasion was therefore by no means the lesser as when severally performed.

The Math premises, the 'Thakur's' temple and the little 'Samadhi' temple of the Swamiji wore their gala appearance on this day, with flags and banners floating in the wind and the floral adornments inside each, all very deftly executed and made charming to look upon. The spacious courtyard was canopied over and on the south side of it

was placed a big portrait of the Swamiji, in his mendicant garb, the whole thing being embowered in the midst of a very artistic setting of moss, flowers and creepers of all kinds. At the very dawn of the day, there was the 'usha-kirtan,' the chant which took all hearts captive by the simplicity and sincerity of the whole choir and its cue was caught up and sustained throughout the day by various manner of songs and musical performances, now the rapturous melody of the Vaishnava lyrics and now again, the 'Mother-chants,' the 'Kali-kirtan' which has of late years grown to be quite a favourite with the Math members themselves and is as universally liked by the laity of all classes. The 'Kirtan' of the Madras Bhaktas, all in its native style, was quite a novel feature and attracted huge interest. The visitors of the day were past enumeration and it was towards the after-



noon that the crowd reached to its zenith. A good part of the Math grounds was taken over with equipages of all kinds and the river-front practically swarmed over with boats, from sunrise to sundown.

The rich and the poor alike were sumptuously treated, the never-failing courtesy and the pleasing address of the Swamis and the volunteers for the occasion, acting as a leaven to the bread of charity and good-will so generously and religiously distributed as the order of the day. The proceedings were throughout graced by the august presence of the Swami Brahmananda this year. Everybody keenly felt, however, the absence of the Swami Premananda (now convalescent) whose sweet, saintly personality was wont to lend an added charm to the Math Utsavas every year.

#### In Calcutta.

At the instance of the Calcutta Vivekananda Society Swamiji's birthday anniversary was celebrated in February last, at the University Institute Hall, College Square. The Hon'ble Maharajadhiraj of Burdwan presided. The Honorary Secy. read the annual report. Then the President in the course of a Bengali speech dwelt on the remarkable selflessness of Swami Vivekananda who had travelled to America and other distant lands at the behest of his master, Sri Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, with a view to teaching the people of the West the truth of the Vedanta philosophy. The most practical way of paying a tribute to the memory of the Swamiji would be by furthering the cause of his mission work.

MM. Pramatha Nath Tarkabhusan in paying a glowing tribute to Swami Vivekananda eulogised the speeches of the illustrious Sannyasi. After his return from America, Swami Vivekananda in addressing a vast audience had said that India was destined to conquer the world spiritually. The Swami at that meeting had also pointed out the cloud, then not bigger than a man's hand, that had gathered on the Western horizon and which was fraught with dire consequences to follow, sooner or later. Who knew that Vivekananda's prophecy pregnant with celestial fire would not be fulfilled?

Dr. Prabhudayal Shastri referred to the Swamiji's insight into the Vedanta philosophy and his references in connection with that were being demonstrated by the recent scientific discoveries. He was followed by Babu Panchowri Banerji. MM. Satis Chandra Vidyabhushan proposed a vote of thanks to the chair, after which the immense gathering dispersed.

#### At Ranchi.

The birthday anniversary of Swami Vivekananda was celebrated at Duranda, Ranchi, with great *clat*, on the 3rd Feb., '18. Puja, Homa and Sankirtan were performed from 7 to 10 in the morning. Reading from Kathopanishad, Sankirtan, and distribution of Prasada to the public were the

afternoon programme from 4 to 9 p. m. S. J. Sarat Ch. Chakravarty B. A., a disciple of Swamiji, delivered an impressive lecture on the life and teachings of the great Swamiji carrying the audience with him. Another Bhakta of Swamiji gave a hearty meal to 600 poor Narayanas at his own expense.

#### At Benares.

The 56th Birthday Anniversary of Swamiji was celebrated publicly on the 10th February, 1918, when the following programme was observed:—

1. The feeding of the poor, 1-4 p. m.
2. A lecture in English on the life and teachings of Swami Vivekananda by Professor Jadu Nath Sarkar, M. A., P. B. S. (Benares Hindu University), 4-5 p. m.
3. Bhajana with music, 5-7 p. m.
4. Distribution of Prasada.

The Tithipuja had been performed with imposing solemnity on the 3rd Feb. On the 10th, before the appointed time people began to muster in crowds. The platform was nicely decorated with flowers and bunting, as suited the occasion. At 4 p. m., after an opening song by one of the Bhaktas, Professor Jadu Nath Sarkar delivered his attractive speech, to the following effect:—

Gentlemen, India has been full of eminent sages throughout the ages; and I am sure you would ask for reasons why we should select one out of the large number of our sages for celebration. What special teaching and what special principles did the great Swami give us? These questions require to be answered when we have met together to celebrate the 56th birthday of Swami Vivekananda. I will try to give a brief account of his life but there are many whom Vivekananda has left in India and Europe who can explain his teachings in more eloquent words from personal contact with him, than I can do. Swami Vivekananda was born 55 years ago in January 1863. His grandfather, father and mother were not ordinary people, and he naturally felt that he was a son of the lordly Dattas. At school and college he was very fond of discussing philosophy and there was a hunger for truth in his heart. He passed the F. A. and B. A. and was preparing for Law examination when the call came to him. As a student he discussed with his fellows what true religion was and took much interest in religious debates. He was a hard-working student and always threw his soul into whatever he undertook. He acquired knowledge and strength. It is a higher gift to acquire knowledge and impart it to others than merely to accumulate learning and thought. The accumulation of knowledge without the least possible efforts to impart the same does no good to the community nor to the cause of civilisation. The ideal of Swami Vivekananda was to read, think and talk. He studied philosophy in the B. A. course. Dr. Brajendra Nath Seal, one of his fellow-



students at the General Assembly's College, said that the aim of Vivekananda, even then, was to test his belief and accept nothing on trust, and that in consequence he passed through many phases of doubt. The key-note of his life is that he had a passion to teach and impart the knowledge which he had attained himself. Ramakrishna Paramahansa perceived what a mighty instrument Vivekananda would be in his hands. Vivekananda became the follower of Ramakrishna in the 24th year of his life, viz. 1886. He visited all parts of Hindustan often in disguise, and in the year 1893 he proceeded from Madras to Chicago, where one day it so happened that he was penniless and hungry and fainted. As he was lying on the floor, there came the image of his Guru and gave strength to his mind. This great teacher was needed even more in the West than in the East. His message, which went straight to the heart, could in no way be hidden or suppressed. All of a sudden the inhabitants of Chicago felt that Swami Vivekananda was the Messiah of the Age, who could easily move the whole world. His lectures were published and he visited England in 1895. He came back to India in 1897, as he felt that his motherland stood in great need of his service.

Vivekananda was the heart of New India; he preached the message that the life either of contemplation or of action alone is not a complete life. Railway engines even must take some rest. A man who is merely a money-making machine is an incomplete and futile man. The message that the life of action must be combined with that of contemplation is an old one, not unknown to Europe or India before. Vivekananda emphasised its supreme importance to-day. This is the only method by which we can attain to human perfection. Vivekananda preached the message to the West which had forgotten it. He showed how religion is a law of action to the strong and not merely the consolation of the weak. Religion is another word for duty and a true faith is a realisation within and without us. Vivekananda, when a student of philosophy at Calcutta, tested and tried to realise within himself the truth of the dogmas he was called upon to accept. He moved step by step in his spiritual development till he met Ramakrishna and found what convinced him as the truth. He even doubted and tested his Guru before surrendering to him. His belief was strong that what is true must assert itself, and all true religions must lead to self-realisation in the believer. God is the essence, the sum total of strength, and we must appreciate all true words spoken in every land and age. A Hindu Sannyasin, he could admire the Saracen conquerors of Spain and the Delhi Sultan Sher Shah; and there was appreciation of supreme truth in any form in his mind. He

said, "Even if you sin, you must sin boldly. Be not cowards. Do evil like a man, if you are bent upon doing evil. Religion cannot be a weakness." He improved his health and physique in College, and once carried off the first prize in boxing! Vivekananda held that the selfish quest of individual salvation is not true Hinduism. To get salvation our duty to society must be done. By serving the poor, you are working to complete your own manhood. Chicago is the centre of the money-making machine but the Swami preached to this "Hub of the modern world" that it must change its life. He felt after a year that India required his presence even more than England or America. Organisation and social service are the necessities of the day not only materially but even more spiritually. The true essence of Hindu asceticism is not to banish ourselves from the world, in order to be free, but to obey a higher law than our individual will. "I see the Shiva in the afflicted," as he boldly declared, and relieving the misery of the poor is the best adoration of Shiva. The fruit of action belongs to God. It is man's duty merely to act. No religion can be afraid of truth. Truth conquers and not falsehood. Sin is only a form of ignorance. The message of Hinduism is that this world is not everything; that work and worship must go together. Vivekananda is the heart of New India and it is according to the fitness of things that his birthday should be celebrated wherever thoughtful Indians can congregate.

Mr. Kali Prasanna Chatterji, late Joint Editor, 'Tribune,' Lahore, then spoke very impressively and humorously in Urdu for the benefit of those who could not understand English and narrated from his personal knowledge several incidents of the life of the great Swami, who was his guest at Lahore. He said that the Swami combined the East and the West, and as the European journalist Goodwin said, "Here is a sign of both working together."

The meeting came to a close at about 7 p. m.

#### At Kankhal.

The birthday anniversary was celebrated with usual form at the R. K. Mission Sevashrama, Kankhal on the 10th Feb. Devotional songs were sung before the decorated portrait of Swamiji. Next Sm. Satyabala Devi played a devotional air to the accompaniment of the Vina, with much effect. Then followed a religious discourse by Pandit Jogindra Ch. Sarma Sankhya-Vedanta-tirtha on the life and teachings of the Swami, who held the audience for an hour and a half. He dwelt on the manifold aspect of the Swami's teaching and ended by saying that the service of our fellow-beings has been insisted on by the Swami as a special mode of religious life, and in pursuance of his gospel of service Sevashrams and Homes of Service have sprung up in different parts of the country with their



faces set towards the evolution of new forms of religious life, by directing the monastic religious impulse to the service of man.

In the afternoon the poor Narayanas who had assembled in the spacious lawn of the Savashrama, were treated to a sumptuous feast with puri, halua, etc. It was late in the evening that they dispersed glorifying the great name of him who had again felt for them like a second Buddha.

#### At Brindaban.

The birthday anniversary of the Swamiji was celebrated at the R. K. Mission Sevashrama, Brindaban, on Sunday, the 3rd Feb. 1918. The chief feature of the day was the feeding of about 350 poor Narayanas with Kitchiri, and nice curries and sweets.

#### At Bangalore.

The 56th birthday of Swami Vivekananda was celebrated with becoming grandeur in the Sri Ramakrishna Mutt, Bangalore, on the 10th Feb. As usual Swamiji's picture was escorted in procession to the Mutt by Swamiji's numerous admirers. The poor were sumptuously fed and there was an appropriate Harikatha performance.

At 5-30 p. m. Mr. N. Venkatesa Iyengar commenced his lecture on the life and teachings of the Swamiji in Kannada. He dwelt feelingly on the various qualities of the Swamiji that made him known all the world over. He appealed to the people to rise above pettiness, holding the Swamiji as a great example.

Mr. K. H. Ramiah, B. A., Bar-at-law, next spoke on the same subject in English. He ably dwelt on the greatness of Swami Vivekananda as an illustrious teacher of mankind. He spoke on the personal qualities of head and heart of the Swamiji, of the great work he did as an interpreter of the East to the West, of his struggles and troubles, of his prophetic observations on social, educational and spiritual matters. He urged the importance of physical culture, of having a strong and vigorous body before expecting to possess a strong and sound mind, and exhorted the audience to become manly in thought, word and deed. Finally, he quoted passages from the speeches of the Swamiji bearing on social reform, education of the masses, sectarian disputes and the absorbing topic of the Brahmin and non-Brahmin etc. Swamiji's advice that Brahmins should come forward to elevate the non-Brahmins was listened to with approval and applause.

Under the auspices of the Vedanta Society, Bangalore Cantt., Swamiji's anniversary was celebrated on a grand scale in the premises of the C. V. S. Sabha School on the 17th Feb. At noon about a thousand poor people were sumptuously fed and food was also sent to the poor orphans of the St. Patrick's Orphanage. In the afternoon there was a musical entertainment by Mr. V. T. Devaraj Mudaliar. In the evening Mr. R. A. Krishnamacharya,

B. A., delivered an inspiring lecture on the life and work of the Swamiji and also spoke about the personal conversation he had during his college days when he met Swamiji at Madras. The Swamis of the Ramakrishna Mission, Basavangudi, were also present. At 7 p. m. there was a grand procession of Swami Vivekananda's pictures on a Vimana accompanied by Bhajana parties. The procession moved through the main streets of the town, and reached the Sabha School at 9 p. m. and the proceedings were brought to a close by Mangalarathi and distribution of Prasada.

#### At Aurangabad.

Vivekananda-day was celebrated at Aurangabad under the auspices of the Ramakrishna Brotherhood. A meeting was held in the Library Hall and Sri S. Krishna Vaidya delivered a lecture on 'Swamiji's work in the West.' Mr. D. G. Sarolker presided. The meeting came to a close after a Bengali prayer specially prepared in honour of the Swami.

#### At Jaffna.

The 56th birthday anniversary of Srmat Swami Vivekananda was celebrated by the Jaffna Vivekananda Society with great eclat, on the 4th Feb. '18. The Ramakrishna Mahavidyalayam Hall was tastefully decorated. The photos of the Swamis of the Ramakrishna Mission with suitable mottos from the sayings of the Master adorned the pillars and walls. On the dais were kept the garlanded photos of the Master and Swami Vivekananda.

After Bhajana from 8 to 10 a. m., Puja was performed, and about 200 Bhaktas partook of the Prasada. The feeding of about 300 poor people lasted from 1 to 4 p. m. The photo of the Swami was next taken in procession with music which reached back the Vidyalayam at 6 p. m. A meeting was then held at the Vidyalayam Hall. Mr. S. Kandiah, Proctor S. C., President of the Society, took the chair. Pundit S. Mailvaganam delivered a very learned and interesting lecture in Tamil on "The Life and Work of Srmat Swami Vivekananda," in which he laid special stress on the deep love the Swami had for his country and his countrymen. He was followed by Mr. S. Thyagarajapillai, who spoke on Vedanta. Then the Jaffna Vivekananda Society's Tract No. I.—"The Messages of Swami Vivekananda," translated into Tamil, was freely distributed.

The 56th Birthday Anniversary of the Swami Vivekananda was also celebrated with becoming religious rites and feeding of poor Narayanas at the Ramakrishna Home, Madras; Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati; Rk. Math, Allahabad; Rk. Ashrama, Sargachi (Murshidabad); Rk. Ashrama, Kishanpur (Dehra Dun); Vivekananda Ashrama, Kuala Lumpur (F. M. S.); Shanti Ashrama, Totapalli Hills (Godavari) and other places. For want of space we reserve some further reports of the celebration for the next issue of P. B.